

April 18, 2023

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

Support of American Indian and Alaska Native Data Best-Practices for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

Los Angeles County is home to the greatest number of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) of any county in the United States. However, meaningful and comprehensive data on the AIAN population of Los Angeles County is currently lacking. This is in part due to existing data practices codified by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that systematically undercount and effectively erase large percentages of AIAN.

For the first time since 1997, there is an opportunity to review and develop recommendations for revising OMB's 1997 Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15). The goal is to improve the quality and usefulness of SPD 15, to ensure data collection and reporting standards for Federal race and ethnicity data better reflects a diverse America. The SPD 15 sets the minimum reporting requirements to which all Federal agencies and, by extension, local jurisdictions and other organizations funded by them, must adhere. Thus, this process presents an incredible opportunity to improve standards of practice and advance the interests of equity and racial justice, particularly for communities that are small, mixed, or otherwise obscured including LA County's AIAN population.

Proposed revisions include consolidating race and ethnicity to a single combined

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question. The combined question reduces confusion differentiating between race/ethnicity and delivers more consistent responses, particularly among Latino/Hispanic-identified respondents. In Southern California, and Los Angeles County in particular, individuals identifying as AIAN are racially and ethnically mixed. According to Census 2020, only 6% of the AIAN population is AIAN alone, 22% are AIAN alone or in combination (non-Hispanic), and 78% of AIANs also identify as Latino/Hispanic. In total, 94% of the AIAN population of Los Angeles County is racially or ethnically mixed. Consolidating these multiple questions into a single question format reduces confusion for respondents who wish to select multiple identities and as a result encourages AIAN respondents to share their full identities.

Additionally, and perhaps more impactfully, the shift of the Hispanic/Latino category to categorical equivalence with the other minimum racial categories discourages the common practice of top-coding Hispanic/Latino ethnicity and only reporting non-Hispanic/Latino racial selections. Top-coding has the effect of erasing the racial identities of individuals who also identify as Hispanic/Latino. In the case of Los Angeles County, top-coding Hispanic/Latino erases 78% of AIANs, dropping AIANs from 3.3% of the population to 0.73% of the population. Top-coding is an existential threat to AIAN populations. The value top-coding ethnicity brings to the complete and accurate reporting of racial self-identification is unclear, however the damage it offers to AIAN communities, in particular, is plain. These recommendations are aligned with that of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission, which has been advocating and uplifting the need to address inequitable data collection and remedy such practices as top

coding for nearly three decades.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, through the Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch in advisement with the Executive Director of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission, to send a five-signature letter to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by April 27, 2023 expressing Los Angeles County's support of American Indian and Alaska Native Data Best-Practices in OMB's Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15) proposed change to a single combine race/ethnicity question and discouraging ethnic top-coding practices.

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